

Message Text

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12

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

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R 261410Z NOV 75

FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7548

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 1812

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PBOR, IS, JO

SUBJECT: THE SITUATION ON THE WEST BANK

1. SUMMARY. ALTHOUGH SUFFERING FROM FACTIONALISM, PROVINCIALISM, AND A LACK OF LEADERSHIP, THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF WEST BANK INHABITANTS ARE UNITED IN OPPOSITION TO ISRAELI OCCUPATION AND, SINCE THE RABAT DECISION, SUPPORT THE PLO. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT WEST BANKERS WILL ACCEPT GOI PROPOSALS FOR GREATER LOCAL AUTONOMY. END SUMMARY.

2. FROM JERUSALEM, THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM (INCLUDING THE WEST BANKERS AND EAST JERUSALEMITES) IS A PARADOX: IT IS NOT "URGENT" IN THE SENSE THAT THE GOLAN HEIGHTS OR ANOTHER CONFERENCE ARE IN MAINTAINING MOMENTUM AND AVOIDING STALEMATE, YET THE LONGER NOTHING TANGIBLE IS DONE TO ADDRESS THEIR SITUATION, THE MORE DIFFICULT AN OVERALL SOLUTION BECOMES. ONE REACTION TO THE UN RESOLUTION ON ZIONISM HAS BEEN TO SPUR GREATER ISRAELI DEMANDS FOR SETTLEMENTS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES INCLUDING THE WEST BANK AND EAST JERUSALEM. (SEE SEPTTEL ON LATEST GUSH EMUNIM
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SETTLEMENT ATTEMPT.)

3. ONE RESPECTED ISRAELI JOURNALIST HAS CHARACTERIZES PERES' SUGGESTION FOR GREATER CIVILIAN WEST BANK RULE AS TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE. INDEED, SOME LEADING WEST BANK PALESTINIANS FEEL THAT ISRAEL, HAVING REFUSED IN THE 1967-74 PERIOD TO NEGOTIATE WITH KING HUSSEIN ON A MEANINGFUL BASIS, WAS TAKEN BY SURPRISE BY THE RABAT DECISION. GIVEN ISRAEL'S ADAMANT REFUSAL TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE PLO, AN IMPASSE NOW EXISTS WHICH ISRAELI LEADERS HAVE SOUGHT TO FILL BY REVIVING PROPOSALS FOR GREATER WEST BANK LOCAL ADMINISTRATION.

4. WE AGREE WITH THE DEPARTMENT (STATE 260910), THAT WEST BANKERS ARE UNLIKELY (TO PUT IT MILDLY) TO ACCEPT GREATER AUTONOMY AT THE HANDS OF THE OCCUPYING AUTHORITIES. WE ARE ALSO SKEPTICAL IN A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF NEW LOCAL OFFICIALS WHO WOULD BE MORE SYMPATHETIC TO ISRAELI PROPOSALS. ONE DIFFICULTY IS, AS WEST BANKERS POINT OUT, THAT ISRAEL HAS SYSTEMATICALLY PREVENTED THE EMERGENCE OF WEST BANK LEADERS WHO WOULD BE CAPABLE OF ARTICULATING THE POLITICAL ASPIRATIONS OF A MAJORITY OF WEST BANKERS. PRESENT LEADERS ARE LOCAL MAYORS AND NOTABLES WHO ARE CONCERNED WITH THEIR OWN MUNICIPALITIES.

5. THE COMMON POLITICAL DENOMINATOR THROUGHOUT THE WEST BANK IS OPPOSITION TO ISRAELI OCCUPATION. AN OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF WEST BANKERS SUPPORT THE PLO ON THE GROUND THAT IT IS ACTIVELY TRYING TO ACHIEVE PALESTINIAN NATIONAL ASPIRATIONS. SOME MODERATE WEST BANKERS EXPLAIN THEIR SUPPORT ON THE GROUND THAT THEY HAVE TO ABIDE BY THE DECISIONS OF THE RABAT SUMMIT AND THE UN CONCERNING THE PLO. THERE ARE MAYORS AND NOTABLES WHO PERSONALLY WOULD PREFER TO SEE ISRAEL NEGOTIATE WITH JORDAN OR EVEN ENVISAGE A TEMPORARY UN ADMINISTRATION PENDING SELF-DETERMINATION; HOWEVER, REALISTICALLY SPEAKING, THEY DO NOT SEE THESE AS VIABLE OPTIONS AT THIS TIME. THERE IS NO ENTHUSIASM FOR RETURN TO THE HASHEMITE FOLD THOUGH SOME WOULD BE WILLING TO HAVE JORDANIANS REPLACE THE ISRAELIS AS AN INTERIM STEP TOWARD SELF-DETERMINATION.

6. ECONOMICALLY SPEAKING, THE WEST BANKERS ARE BETTER OFF THAN THEY WERE PRIOR TO 1967 ALTHOUGH INFLATION AND DEVALUATION HAS ERODED THEIR NEW STANDARD OF LIVING. HOWEVER, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE RELATIVE PROSPERITY ASSOCIATED WITH ISRAELI OCCUPATION

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HAS SOFTENED THE WEST BANK POLITICAL VIEWS STATED ABOVE.

7. IN THE MEANTIME, PRESSURES WITHIN ISRAEL HAVE INCREASED FOR NEW SETTLEMENTS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES, PRESSURES WHICH WE ASSUME THE GOVERNMENT COALITION WILL FIND HARD TO REFUSE TOTALLY. IN ADDITION, THE JERUSALEM MUNICIPALITY IS HAVING DIFFICULTY RESISTING LARGE-SCALE ISRAELI DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES IN EAST JERUSALEM.

8. AS WITH SO MANY OTHER ELEMENTS OF THE MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM,
TIME DOES NOT SEEM TO BE WORKING IN THE DIRECTION OF AN EVENTUAL
PEACEFUL ACCOMMODATION. POLITICAL PROGRESS APPEARS BLOCKED;
DELAY WORKS IN THE DIRECTION OF MAKING A DIFFICULT SOLUTION EVEN
MORE DIFFICULT, AND NO PEACEFUL SOLUTION SEEMS POSSIBLE
IF ISRAEL INSISTS ON HOLDING ON TO MOST OF THE
ADMINISTERED TERRITORY.
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